

Testimony Submitted by Andrew Silva

S.B. No. 840 - An Act Concerning Next Generation Connecticut

My name is Andrew Silva, I'm from Enfield, CT and am a Chemical Engineering major at UConn. I am submitting this testimony as an advocate of investment, progress, and the future of our state's education. I believe that passing the Act Concerning Next Generation Connecticut would be the perfect demonstration of Connecticut's commitment to those who are pursuing a career in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. All of the facts about the large scale impact this bill will have on the Connecticut economy and on UConn's enrollment, have been presented. So today I would like to describe how this bill will have an impact on the individuals that will cause those large scale improvements in economic and enrollment statistics.

When I was a senior in high school looking at colleges, I was pretty confident that I wanted to pursue some type of engineering. With this in mind, I started looking at the schools that I felt valued and specialized in science and engineering. Carnegie Mellon, Rensselaer Polytechnic, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute all made that initial list. When it came time to choose schools, financial issues forced me to turn down my first choice, Rensselaer, and enroll in UConn.

While it wasn't my first choice at that point in time, I can say today, with confidence, that I would never change my decision to come to UConn. When I graduate, the diploma that I will receive will be the least of what this university has given me. At this point in my college career, I have been able to conduct undergraduate research, secure two engineering-related internships, and lead an organization that uses engineering to help the world's poorest communities. All of this has been possible because of the education I've received in class and the experience I've gained outside of class in engineering-based extracurricular organizations. With an initiative like Next Generation Connecticut, we can enhance this education and these experiences as well as provide a larger volume of students with these opportunities.

While I have found UConn to be a great school, Connecticut has the potential to become a hub of excellence in STEM areas. The passing of Next Generation Connecticut would allow UConn to pull in many students who are looking to attend an institution that specifically values its science and engineering programs; UConn would become one of those institutions. On the individual level, if I were to make my College Wish List 10 years from now, with this initiative in place, UConn would be at the top of that list.

This is an investment in students like me and my classmates; an investment in the professors I see every day and in the residents of Connecticut that deserve a stronger economy. To be honest, the students that this bill will benefit most may not even know yet that they want to pursue a career in a science or engineering. This could change their mind. This could convince them to fulfill their potential to become Connecticut's new engineers, entrepreneurs, or doctors. They may not know that this is the role they will eventually fill, so I'm here today on their behalf to support this bill. Let's make Connecticut more competitive, more innovative, and supportive of our Next Generation. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

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